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MORAL ACTION AND NATURAL LAW IN KANT

E. MORRIS MILLER

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MORAL ACTION AND NATURAL LAW IN KANT.

MORAL ACTION AND NATURAL LAW IN KANT,

and some developments.

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By

E. MORRIS MILLER, M.A.

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NOTE.

This Paper contains the substance of a Lecture on some developments since Kant, with a short exposition of the Analytic of the Critique of Practical Reason.

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I.

KANT'S DUALISM.

Two things impressed Kant with awe and admiration—the starry firmament above and the moral law within, and he directly connected them with the consciousness of his own existence. The one related to the world of sense; the other to the invisible regions of the self. The former affirmed the littleness of man in the presence of spatial vastness and illimitable movement; the latter revealed the moral strength and infinite grandeur of personality. Kant was led to dwell somewhat severely upon the apparent separateness of these two worlds. The natural philosophy of his day compelled him to recognise the importance of an undeviating progression of law and order, with which man could not interfere; but at the same time his unconquerable faith in the high moral worth of the individual constrained him to make the attempt to discover a rational foundation for personal freedom in spite of the seemingly irresistible onslaught of physical necessity. So vigorously did he attack this problem, and so emphatically did he lay down his conclusions, that we

are obliged to begin with Kant, if we would understand current aspects of ethical activity.

Kant's position is well established. He stands at a turning point in the attitude of men to the universe of things. Hume had undermined the foundations of the older system of thought, and Kant was called to build the superstructure of knowledge upon a firmer basis. It was not to be expected that he could accomplish a complete break with past relations: that would be scarcely possible; and he was not bound to despise the traditional methods of thought. Nevertheless, he was strong enough to alter the trend of investigation and awake the slumbering depths of the human mind. In opposition to the predecessors of Hume, who had worked from without, Kant was led to inquire whether the problems of knowledge might not be solved by starting from within. His aim was to show that the mind was not a mere resultant of sense impressions. In his analytical treatment of knowledge Kant separated sense and understanding. The manifold of sense was a mass of chaotic impressions constituting the matter or content of sensuous experience, and became resolved into perceptions by the imposition of the forms of space and time. But in sense-forms knowledge existed in its crudest state. It was therefore necessary that these perceptions should be worked upon by

the categories of the understanding and resolved into a shapely unitary system. To establish this connection of related objects in experience was the task of the understanding, which provided the instruments for the operation from its own inherent constitution. Sense was essentially passive; the understanding active; and the union of both was required to produce knowledge. Understanding manifested its activity in so far as it had sense materials given to it; apart from these elements the forms contributed by the mind were of no avail for knowledge.

In addition to the ordinary categories, Kant formulated his supreme principle of the unity of human thought, the combining self-conscious ego, which constituted itself the basis for the permanent union of the things of sense and the forms of the understanding. This unifying self-active subject was the necessary accompaniment of all sense perceptions, and apart from its functions of unity, order and coherence were impossible. Objects of experience existed as objects for the subject which determined them. They were not things-in-themselves, but phenomenal of something which was not apparent to thought. The constitutive principles of the understanding, which, through the self-conscious ego, resolved the impressions, received from the matter of sense, into perceptions, conceptions,

and relations, were phenomenal, also of an unknowable, or pure ego. So what was known by us was purely phenomenal—that which appears only; but beyond the appearances there were the unknowable ego and the thing-in-itself.

All knowledge was therefore relative and phenomenal. On mere theoretical grounds we could know nothing of the reality behind appearances. We may speculate concerning the beyond; but our speculations would prove vain and foolish. Knowledge for Kant was merely scientific knowledge of the demonstrable. The categories of the understanding revealed to us a world of objects in inter-relation, dependent for its cognition upon the principle of self-consciousness. It is far from being completely known by us; we may go on and on developing relations between things, but we can never attain to a perfectly systematised unity, though the need is felt for some directive principles to regulate this indefiniteness. We are led to conceive these regulative ideas, but we are unable to formulate them for use in experience, as they are ideal only, and have no real determination in a world of phenomena related to an empirical self-consciousness.

The point to be emphasised is that, in Kant's judgment, the mind possessed no positive knowledge of things-in-themselves in the

world of pure reason, but was confined to natural phenomena, or the system of reciprocally interacting things, determined under the law of causation. But knowledge in its ordinary acceptation is not limited to a community of related objects in space and time—a mere mechanical universe of "dead" matter, but also includes the fact of the existence of this system of connected phenomena in their relation to the mind which comprehends them. We recognise the indissoluble coherence of objects in the natural world as being something not determined by ourselves; but without the assumption of its rationality and intelligibility it has no meaning for us, and our knowledge of it would be vain, or rather impossible.

And rationality is meaningless apart from the unity of the whole, and unless this ultimate fact enters into knowledge as a prime condition, we cannot claim to know things at all, and even the world of reciprocally-related objects under causation would be void of its most indispensable foundation. There must be presupposed the subject for which the objects exist, and without which they can have no rational interpretation. The intelligence cannot therefore be divorced from nature without losing the whole of the system which has been laboriously built up by Kant. We do possess real knowledge of the world in some degree,

though not fully, but to a sufficient extent to nullify the separation by Kant between reason and understanding, and his elaborate attempt to find some form of regulative connection between them.

Owing to his radical distinction between the sensible and intelligible worlds, Kant was unable to obtain through knowledge positive ideas of God, the soul, and immortality. These ideas transcend the limits of sentient experience. It is illusory to suppose that we can affirm positive statements concerning their existence by means of judgments of understanding, though we recognise the need of a belief in them; but mere experience cannot guarantee that faith. The human mind struggles to obtain comprehension of a totality of natural phenomena, but inevitably fails, for effect succeeds cause indefinitely. Indeed, the very limits of knowledge compel this attempt to transcend them and reach unto ideas of the supersensible and obtain some form of an unconditioned or absolute. But the infinite is on these grounds an impossible demand: it has no counterpart in experience, though it forces on us the incompleteness of human knowledge, and the idea of it urges the endeavour towards a more extensive grasp of the world of things in time and space.

But the felt need of a higher existence than mere sentience cannot be satisfied with this

regulative function of rational ideas: their realisation is a necessity for man. There are practical interests which make their existence imperative. Morality is far more important than mere consciousness of sense phenomena, however completely organised and unified, and exerts claims of a wider and more pressing significance to men than scientific knowledge as laid down in the first Critique. And so, in spite of these exacting limitations upon experience, Kant sought to establish the ethical being of man upon real foundations. His moral nature was not in subjection to the play of sense: it was free from these trammels, and moved within a world of its own. Kant realised the impasse the physicists had created in granting to natural laws universal dominion. He strove to confine them within the sphere of theoretical determinations, and erect a barrier against them in the form of a world of noumena in which freedom became the supreme principle. We can scarcely call him happy in his method; but his purpose effected a revolution in philosophic investigation.

II.

MORAL LAW.

Kant seeks in his Critique of Practical Reason to find a basis for the existence of God, freedom, and immortality. Its pivotal concept is freedom, and the justification of his attempt stands or falls on this idea. In the Analytic he endeavours to establish it on negative grounds and give it a positive sanction through the moral law. Freedom thus secured, it is for Kant an easy gradation to the existence of a Supreme Being and immortality.

Kant opens with practical principles, and defines them as general determinations of the will. The will is urged to action in various ways. These may be summarised; and general modes of conduct obtained. Any rule which is accepted as a guide to action may be looked upon as a determination of the will, and the nature of the rule or principle depends on the manner of direction. Does the stimulus to act come from something external to the will? Or, does the will determine itself in independence of the constraints of circumstance?

Resolutions which aim at the satisfaction of

one's own wishes are maxims, or rules of prudence, having value for the individual only; but acts of universal validity, binding on all absolutely, express practical laws. Maxims, as mere rules, are subjective and conditional; practical laws, without exception, apply in all instances. Prudence simply exemplifies a rule which suits the subject's convenience and gratifies his desires: it is not of permanent value for him, and is varied at pleasure. On the other hand, practical laws are principles, objective in character, which the individual does not make for himself, but accepts as necessary instantly on their recognition, and which impose themselves upon his desires and exist apart from their tolerance. In acting in response to the initiative of a universal law, the will does so irrespective of consequences or self-advantage. Maxims, then, which are empirical and material, cannot give a universal rule. As such they have no moral significance —the incitement to action is due entirely to subjective conditions or sensibility to pleasure and pain. Desires with their hedonistic accompaniments, being determined by the sensibility of the individual, belong to the phenomenal world, and are therefore under the law of natural causation, and are denied moral worth by Kant.

Generalising these empirical rules, Kant finds that they operate because the subject

seeks something on account of the pleasure anticipated in its realisation, and that the real aim is individual happiness, which he defines as a continued state of agreeable feelings. This love of self is the predisposing motive, and applies both to sensual hedonism and intellectual delights, for with Kant there is no real distinction between the two. Pleasure becomes practical as affecting the sensibility and stimulating desire, and the pleasures of understanding are not different in kind; if the intellect enjoys enthralling emotions, they must have been the due to experiential sources.* Though Kant here separates sense and understanding from the moral nature of man, later on he is compelled to invent some form of bridge to connect happiness with virtue as the *summum bonum* for man. He admits that the will is directed by moral law to seek its highest welfare in this union of virtue and its accompaniment of happiness, but the connection is not guaranteed by moral law, but by the existence of God. Happiness is only good for man so long as he acts under the determination of moral law, and, unless we can show that there is a higher faculty of desire, we have not got beyond the stage of mere happiness as the ideal of moral action.

*The bringing of particular instances under a general law, or the revelation of some purpose in the distribution of things may give pleasure. (*Critique of Judgment*).

Kant maintains that there is this higher faculty, and that the will may be determined to action by the pure form or idea of law. Whether the intention be actualised in experience or not, or whether the results are as determined, the essential point is that the will is inwardly constrained to action by the formal sanctions of law apart from material considerations. This distinction between a higher and lower faculty must not be based on the grounds of a difference between pleasures of sense and those of understanding, for the feeling is the same whatever be its origin. If we cannot show that the will has this inner disposition towards good as distinct from emotional anticipations, there can be no higher faculty at all.

Thus maxims with external derivation have no moral worth for Kant. His method can only get empirical laws from material conditions, and these are incapable of producing a morality of unchallenged application. They are mere rules for special circumstances. What he is aiming at is a system of moral principles carrying with them in their own right absolute obligations. If the moral law be universally binding, it must be through the pure form: its authority must reside within itself; otherwise morality is mere expediency. The will must be determined necessarily, must find its determining motive in its own formal nature. We are here concerned then with an idea that

in itself determines the will to moral activity. The fact of this idea, the form of universal law, which only reason can comprehend, commanding the will by its own inner constraint, presents the will as independent of natural causation, and this is Kant's first view of freedom—transcendence of the sphere of phenomena.

This negative aspect of freedom he had established in his earlier work. The effects of natural law being ruled out, we are left with the pure law itself, in which we find the principle of determination. A free will is therefore determined by unconditional practical law, and the one involves the other, though the moral law is prior. We are directly conscious of moral law: we could not be so of freedom, for our first recognition of it is negative. But moral law cannot be apart from freedom; otherwise it would merely be a law of causation. Hence the consciousness of moral law leads to consciousness of freedom, for which we thus obtain a positive basis.

Being free, we inwardly accept the imperative demands of law, and our maxims unfold themselves in harmony with that law. This inner experience is a fact of reason: it flows from reason itself: it cannot be derived from consciousness of freedom, for that consciousness comes from consciousness of moral law. On Kant's basis of knowledge we cannot es-

tablish a free subject: we do not know how a free will is possible, and cannot positively presuppose it in terms of experience. We are therefore unable to obtain Kant's supreme law of morality by analysis. But the consciousness of the moral law is, in a sense, given to us. We are directly conscious of it, but not in the same way as we are of external objects. It is given as originated by pure reason, which alone is the source of the law. The moral law is thus constitutive of the inner activity of man as self-legislating. It holds good for all rational beings without exception, and is the supreme formal condition for their moral valuation. For finite wills it takes the form of an imperative: they may have a pure will, but they also have wants and desires, i.e., they are not possessed of a holy will, such as God's, whose will wills the law absolutely. In him inclinations have no standing. His maxims are inevitably universal laws. Though not above practical law, his will is yet its complete embodiment. His holiness is the necessary ideal for man, and the imperatives command us to advance towards it. This progress, consistent and determined, constitutes virtue.

God articulates moral law absolutely; with man it is an obligation. What is its driving force? How are desires and inclinations to be held in check? Autonomy of the will is the sole principle of moral action. This is Kant's

solution and supplies the basis for obligations in conformity with moral law: it is independent of the matter of desire. Hence moral law simply expresses the autonomy of pure practical reason, of which it is the essence. Heteronomy of the will, or the following of natural impulses, contradicts obligation.

Autonomy, says Kant, is the formal condition of all maxims; apart from it there can be no harmony of will with the supreme practical law. If our actions are to be moral, they must be based on the self-initiating activity of the will, as determined by pure law.

If desire enters in at all, heteronomy prevails at once, and Kant will not grant such considerations the dignity of morality. In their case the will does not give the law—the law, if so-called, is "pathological," being merely fitted to the occasion, to gain the particular ends sought for. Maxims by themselves cannot be used as a basis for obligations: they must be themselves determined by the will as autonomous, and anything in them contrary to autonomy must go.

Kant concludes, then, that moral law is a direct fact of reason, and that it has as its sole principle of action the autonomy of the will. Freedom is the keystone of the whole arch.

III.

NATURAL LAW AND FREEDOM.

Starting in his Critique of Pure Reason with sense material which became objects of experience through the pure forms of space and time and the categories of the understanding, Kant affirmed that of anything beyond we could have no positive knowledge, though he admitted the necessary value of the conception of noumena as regulative ideas determining the bounds of phenomena. In a further discussion of the problem in his Metaphysic of Morality, he stated that the negative idea of freedom was not inconsistent with the limitations of theoretical knowledge. Practical reason puts us in possession of a fact, an unconditional ought, which we cannot explain in terms of knowledge; and as a fact of the intelligible world it has a positive character. Freedom, as transcendence of sense conditions, obtains a negative sanction; moral law, as springing directly from reason itself, requires no deduction, and its acceptance by the subject as an unconditional imperative imparts a positive conception to freedom and establishes its re-

ality as an immanent principle giving practical value to the ideas of reason.

Kant maintains that practical laws are such that a knowledge of them is presupposed as the condition of the existence of things. We have an ideal to realise, which is rational, and we seek the means to do so under the determination of the law. We must know the law and its effects so as to produce the thing, if we desire to bring in a new order of relations within the sphere of the intelligence. The putting into effect of an object, or desire of will, reveals the need for sound practical judgment; and this also requires the discernment of the understanding. The latter has reference to the relations between things as existing for a subject; but the decision whether an action, possible in the moral sphere, is also possible, or capable of realisation, in the world of nature, involves practical judgment. To enable us to know this, we stand in need of some principle common to both spheres, and expressing some form of connection between them.

In his former treatise Kant bridged the gulf between the manifold of sense and the categories of the understanding by means of schemata, which operated through the imagination in time; but here they can only suggest an analogy for him, as he must mediate between the form of moral law, and the

material effects of moral action. He finds the principles of the understanding the most suitable instruments at hand: they are a type of the universal system of law obtaining in the world of things-in-themselves, and apply within the sphere of phenomena. Morally, we should act as though the constraint came from the irresistible laws of nature themselves, assuming they had the power; i.e., our will should determine itself to action with the necessity and universality of natural law. So, considering the intelligible world as a form of law (apart from its "filling"), we can take it as typified in the world of nature as a system of laws. And this common element of law is sufficient for Kant to get a connection between the world of will and the world of understanding. In this way we obtain a "schema" for the law of freedom relating it to the law of nature.

This conception presents an ideal form of a perfect world, which ought to take concrete shape, even in the world of sense and understanding with its natural laws. Kant lays stress on the fact that a finite rational being has both a sensible and a supersensible nature, and the one ought to conform to the other. In the sensible sphere there are the unbending, unalterably fixed laws of natural necessity, which rule without challenge. From them consequence follows cause undeviatingly.

Every object of experience, determined by another object, must come under this law of causation without exception : that is the final form of phenomena within the limits of human knowledge. But beyond and above this there is the sphere of moral being where will is free, i.e., independent of the mechanical cosmos of causes and effects. The will, by its own inherent nature, accepts the unconditional constraints of moral law and seeks to realise a perfect type or order of conduct, which, to be manifested or perceived, must be actualised in the world of sentient experience. But the consequences in this latter connection may not conform to rational determination of will in the intelligible world. In the ideal sphere there is the supersensible nature of rational beings, their nature (or objective presentation) under the unrestrained autonomy of pure practical reason. If the will had the full power to realise its determinations in a world adequate to the unity of complete self-consciousness, this realisation would reflect the supersensible nature of a rational soul. Here sense experience would be the actual resultant of a noumenal causality. The real world would involve the ideal. The latter might then be called *natura archetypa,* and the former *natura ectypa*. But in Kant's judgment, such a state would preclude all reference to maxims of a particular character and prudential con-

siderations of any description. Mere inclinations must have no place in a formal moral system. Only actions that are the manifest results of internal demands of moral law can be adapted to the archetypal world, or be said to be derived from it. If maxims reveal in their operation principles capable of universal acceptation, they may then have moral worth; but if they arise from desire and particular interests, they belong to the world of sense, and are subject to physical law, and can assume no claim to express the moral attributes of the subject. They are merely the effects of material necessity and their results possess nothing more than the characteristics of external nature. Only those actions reflect moral determination, which conform to the supersensible nature of beings under the autonomy of moral law, i.e., actions determined by the will independently of mere feeling. Such is the rigidity of Kant's passionless formalism.

In this comparison of moral action and sensuous desire, we have the outstanding feature of Kant's ethics, which, according to Edward Caird, consists mainly in the firmness with which he grasps the essential antagonism of spirit and nature in the moral life; and its weakness lies in its exclusive attention to that antagonism.

A will, thus seeking the fulfilment of its ends independently of desire, constitutes

itself a good will. Its goodness just resides in the fact of its determination by an unconditional imperative as the motive of its action. Good and evil then refer in Kant's system to will seeking to realise itself under reason. An object for will in this connection is not the same as an object of experience: the former may not be actualised at all, though ideally sought. The problem for the will is not so much one of material existence as of moral possibility. Conflicting desires need to be brought under moral constraint, and the will's determination is good or evil according to the success or failure of its authority over them. A will, ruled by varying inclinations, comes far short of Kant's conception of the dignified self-legislating moral consciousness, whose activity seeks to actualise, if possible, a perfect system of law. Restraint of feelings, prompted by external objects, must necessarily cause pain of some sort, and this in itself would be a negative feeling. But Kant reveals a positive side. Inclinations may be divided into two classes—self-love and self-esteem. The former may be tolerated on certain conditions: the latter never; it must be absolutely crushed. We may bring the feeling of self-love into conformity with the moral law by the firm operation of restraints, and thus constitute it rational self-love. We must possess self-respect with a view to the fulfilment in us of

the effects of moral law. But self-esteem must be utterly destroyed. In this work of counteracting subjective inclinations, the moral law becomes an object of reverence: if it completely negates self-esteem, it is an object of the highest reverence. So here we have a positive feeling—reverence for the moral law. To stand in awe of it is one of the highest duties of man. This sentiment of reverence does not arise from shame or any physical cause; it is a positive result of the self-legislating activity of moral reason. The moral law so determines the will as a free causality that it acts in independence of natural feeling, and informs the will with a strong reverence for its own sanctity.

The driving forces in such determinations are motives. If all wills were perfect, of the divine type, moral law and natural law would be one and the same, for in that case perception and conception would be one. But human wills are ever incomplete and imperfect, and must be determined to act by pressure (as it were), must be constrained to seek to become the perfect type. A motive is that which exerts power over the will to this end: its essential feature as moral is that it is the operation of the law itself. The moral law becomes for itself its own motive. Its determination of a will that is self-legislating constitutes for that will its guiding principle or

motive. Nothing else will stamp a deed of will as moral: all external pressure is unmoral —the constraint must come from within. On Kant's showing, therefore, an act of will, to be moral, must be self-determined, and never dictated by the promptings of any external source. The root-idea of the whole matter is the conception of freedom. Without this morality would be impossible. The will must be self-initiating and self-determining in seeking good and shunning evil. Good is that condition of will which results from its harmony with the pure form of moral law. A self-dependent will is, for Kant, a good will, and that is its hightest attribute. Good does not necessarily mean anything in actuality: only a condition of will, which seeks to realise a system of objects in conformity with universal law. A good will at all times acts as though it were compelled to action by a law possessing all the force and universality of a law of nature.

Freedom is, then, Kant's presupposition of morality, but he has so emphatically opposed it to natural necessity that his statement of the relation between the two is difficult to accept. Natural necessity has to do with the determination of a thing standing under the condition of time: it has no reference to the thing-in-itself; it merely concerns phenomena. It cannot, therefore, be applied to the agent as

an active being in himself, but only to the phenomenal aspect of him. This side of the agent is the objective presentation of himself in the world, which he views as a spectator. He watches and describes its features; it is never complete in itself, but seems rather a stream of tendencies in which effect follows cause in endless succession. It is an outward view of him. From this standpoint every action would appear as necessarily determined by some previous action. Here the cause lies in the past, which is not in the present control of the agent, and in this respect he may be said not to be free.

Though Kant maintains that we have no theoretical basis for freedom, yet his assertion that presentations, as objects of experience, are created by the mind itself, shows that here is an aspect of mind that does not require to wait upon the external world. This is involved in his negative deduction of freedom. As a moral consciousness, only laws springing from reason can determine the agent. So far as he recognises himself as an intelligence, he may look upon changes in his inner being as determinations of noumenal causality. Being self-active, he can mould the nature of his own activities, but their manifestations are subject to the laws of an external necessity. But how can a noumenal causality, which has to do with a thing-in-itself, connect itself with phe-

nomenal actions as the result of its own inner determinations? Kant avers that a man may maintain that every wrong he has done could have been otherwise. He had the power to do so, which he did not exercise; but when once he exercises that power, in whichever way, the resulting act belongs to a series in which necessity is the paramount law. In the one case, Kant views a man's actions from the point of a spectator. No purposes are considered, only the endless succession of events in time: the present comes from the past as a necessary sequence. But at the same time, a man is more than a mere series of changes. He has motives; he plans purposes; he determines his own being and movements. Viewed from within by the light of his intentions, and the failures he is conscious of, he is certainly a self-legislating being. Kant has separated man as an active soul within the sphere of morality from his outward manifestation as an object in the world of nature subject to its necessary laws. He found a connection between them through the common element of law, by applying the words causation, causality, nature, and the like, in the same sense with reference to objects in the external world and to the self-assertive activity of the mind; but on these grounds he has no claim to say that a man may rightly view his outward movements (phenomena) as

determinations of his noumenal causality (will), seeing that noumenal refers to things-in-themselves (which are beyond the sphere of knowledge), and therefore cannot possibly be known to have these phenomenal effects. Kant has repeatedly inveighed against all attempts to apply the laws relating to appearances to things in themselves; but here he speaks of the Ding-an-sich having causal powers of the same kind, as observed in the world of reciprocal relations. If his distinctions are absolute, the noumenal can never be regarded as direct cause of the phenomenal, as otherwise the one principle of natural causation will prevail throughout. Kant has no real ground for these relations. The two worlds (natural and intellectual) are simply superimposed upon one another without causal connection between them.* Even allowing this, he has not yet established the practical necessity for freedom: he has merely endeavoured to show that man may think of himself as acting as a free agent, and that this attribute is not inconsistent with his being also an object in a series of natural events. But a further objection may be raised. If we maintain the existence of God as the one universal original

*In the Critique of Judgment, Kant endeavours to mediate between understanding and reason by means of the conception of purpose in nature. He adds to efficient causes the principle of final causation. Nature is therefore regarded as a system of final ends.

Being, and the cause of the existence of every other substance, man cannot then be free, for he is the mere determination of this Absolute Cause. He is compelled to act by a Power outside himself, on whom he is dependent both for his natural existence and his causality. Kant meets this difficulty in his wonted fashion. Existence in time is purely a sensuous mode of consciousness: it is phenomenal and belongs not to being as a thing-in-itself. If God is the creator of thinking beings, it must be of things-in-themselves, not of their sensuous aspects. Indeed, says Kant, the former are not created at all, for, if they were, there would be a time when they were not—empty time, and that would be absurd. Therefore, God is not known as the cause of actions which take place in the phenomenal world; he is a noumenal causality, and his effects must be similar to his own nature. He thus gives rise to noumenal beings, and such, as agents, may still be free, for their creatureship does not apply to the world of sense, but to the intelligence.

Kant obtains his positive basis for man's freedom in the causality of a being who belongs to the world of the intelligence. The moral law primarily and directly determines the will, but such a determination is impossible without assuming freedom of action for rational self-conscious beings. To self-con-

sciousness there must correspond a world adequate to itself, though it may not actually be realised to the full in the world as we know it. Self-consciousness strives to find itself in a world which is the objective to itself, and its principle of activity is the moral law. Such action on the part of the self belongs to what ought to be, and is thus independent (according to Kant) of what is.

By his fundamental distinction between necessity in the world of phenomena and freedom in the world of noumena, and his consequent denial of moral worth to desires and sentiments, Kant was compelled to find some form of connection to enable him to ally happiness (which all concede to be an ingredient of morality) with pure ethical endeavour. Having established freedom on a positive basis through the moral law, he found sufficient warrant to guarantee immortality as necessary to the complete realisation of the person of man, and the existence of God as demanding the sure attainment of his highest welfare and well-being—the "summum bonum," the union of virtue and happiness.

IV.

DEVELOPMENTS.

1.—Absolute Idealism.

The separation by Kant of the two worlds, the one physical, and the other intelligible, could scarcely be justified in itself, and possibly on that account his dualism had a marked influence upon future movements in philosophy. His immediate successors attempted to resolve both spheres into one, of which the lower was but a determination of the higher; others held fast to the principle of relativity, and so developed it, until, in Great Britain, it was landed into the agnosticism of Spencer and Huxley, and the empiricism, which Kant strove to slay, reasserted itself. Both of these schools gave only secondary place to one leading purport of Kant's thought—man's moral autonomy, but in recent times there have arisen many philosophers who are asserting the personal freedom of every man and his individual worth as a moral being. This position may be called ethical or personal idealism, and though in various particulars its adherents exercise their special tenets without due restraint, still their main principle—the moral

activity of man and his personal responsibility in a rational universe—stands firm.

The first line of development from Kant was taken by Fichte and Schelling, and was consummated in Hegel. Fichte resolved that Kant's rough dualism must be sublimated, and he used as his means to this end Kant's supreme category of self-consciousness. Nature must be reduced to a creation of thought itself. External objects apparently seem to put a limitation upon all thinking, but in reality they are but the self-limitation of the ego itself. The supreme principle of all knowledge and being is the ego, the non-ego being only the self-created limitations of the ego. From this Absolute Ego Fichte deduces all the principles of the intelligence and will. The sphere of the practical reason transcends and determines the sphere of the intelligence. In the higher range ego is absolutely active, being incapable of passivity. In this absolute activity of the ego, the limitations of the external world are seen to be but illusions, and their true significance is revealed as the self-determination of the Absolute Ego itself. It was by means of this position that Fichte laid so much stress upon moral earnestness, and that he regarded our eternal destiny to be the overcoming of the apparent externality of objects, by realising them as purely the energisings of the Absolute Spirit manifested in

man. But this subjective idealism of Fichte defeated its own ends, for it turned, as Caird puts it, "the life of spirit itself into something shadowy and spectral, a conflict with a ghost that could not be laid."

Schelling advanced upon Fichte in endeavouring to find a more secure place for nature; its objectivity was certainly not a mere illusion of the mind. Nature was the counterpart of the mind. In nature, the Absolute manifested itself as well as in mind. "Nature was visible intelligence, and mind was invisible nature," both being equally manifestations of the Absolute, which was their neutral point—that which was neither the one nor the other, but an absolute indifference to both. The Absolute was therefore an abstract identity in which all differences were lost. It was to this weak abstraction that Hegel strove to give life. Still, Schelling made a great contribution to philosophical knowledge when he endeavoured to find in nature a principle of intelligence, thus making it capable of a rational interpretation. In Hegel all these tendencies reached fruition. His great resolve was to seek a means for reconciling identity with difference in the Absolute Spirit. Fichte was in error in resolving all reality into the absolute ego, that is, subjective idealism, and Schelling went astray in dissolving the Absolute into a neutrum, or point of indifference, that is ob-

jective idealism. For Hegel the truth was in the union of the two, in which the subjective and objective were one, or absolute idealism. This principle of the unity of the subject and the object is a guiding idea in Hegel's thought. There can be no subject without an object, its "other," and no object without a subject, and these obtain their unity in a third term, which comprehends both within itself. There can be, then, no absolute distinctions, for all differences are relative to some underlying unity. Nature is not separated from mind by an impassable gulf; mind or consciousness is but nature's truth,—nature come to a consciousness of itself. The truth of consciousness is self-consciousness, and this constitutes for Hegel the supreme governing category of mind. The Absolute is self-conscious Spirit, that which is object to and for itself; that in which the subject and object are the same, the subject being the unity, the object the differences, and the unity and differences being one. On such principles as these it is easy to show that there is one all Supreme Spirit, and all else are but determinations of this Absolute Spirit, which is God. The Absolute is all in all, and through all. In it all differences are overcome and reconciled; they are only the modes of God's realisation of himself—the explication of the unity implicit in the Supreme Being

from the beginning. They are finally sublimated when unity is regained and established, but the last unity is none other than the first unity enriched and developed. In such a system there can be no place for the uniqueness of man's personality. The world of differences in which man discovers his position is but the luxuriance of the outflow of the Spirit of the Absolute, as Schleiermacher has shown. The mind of man is but a thought-determination of the Absolute Mind, and only seems to partake of existence so long as the Absolute is simply *realising* itself. But, even then, his freedom is merely an abstraction; his life is hardly more than a determination of the Mind of God.

The theory of the Absolute in the Hegelian form has paved the way for a thorough-going doctrine of the immanence of God. Can this doctrine of the self-realising, self-determining Absolute Spirit stand consistent with a belief in the reality of the individual man and his moral aspirations? How are we to preserve the individual? Or, is there any individual to be preserved other than the Absolute himself? Our religious conceptions seem to be bound up very closely with a belief in God's immanence; still this need not be inconsistent with his transcendence of the universe. But we could not establish such a doc-

trine, and man's imperishable value as an individual, in a system based on an Hegelian Absolute. An ethical idealism, affirming the abiding reality of nature, and not sublimating it as Fichte did, may accept Kant's conception of the moral supremacy of man, and give us an idea of God as ultimate ground, in which these elements are not reduced to vague abstractions.

2.—Relativity.

Kant's reduction of all knowledge to relativity stimulated another school of thinkers. He had affirmed that we could only know phenomena, not the things in themselves. Scientific knowledge belonged to the sphere of the understanding, and that which was beyond was reserved for faith—for those assurances which we are compelled to accept as regulative principles, but which can never be proved by the understanding itself. This sharp distinction between what can be proved and what must be taken in faith obtained a very firm hold on the mind of Sir William Hamilton. All human knowledge, in his judgment, was of the conditioned—"to think was to condition," but this demanded the assumption of an unknown reality, which manifested itself through the conditioned. We ourselves are compelled to remain within the sphere of the relative and finite, and we can make no (positive) affirmation concerning the Infinite and Absolute, for they are the contradictory negatives of all that we can ever know. So a clear province was kept for faith, in which the religious mind might exercise itself. This doctrine of relativity on the part of Hamilton, by

the aid of Mansel, was the means of inspiring much of the agnosticism of Huxley and Spencer. These thinkers bowing before the great unknown, strove to confine themselves to the world of knowable things, and, although not materialists, they were closely associated with the naturalistic conceptions of recent times. Spencer had set out to show that the whole of the universe could be explained in terms of matter and motion—that the same terms which were available for physical phenomena could be equally applied to spiritual. But he later confessed failure in this regard, affirming that life in essence could not be conceived in physico-chemical terms, and that the same power which manifested itself in material things was also the power that welled up in ourselves under the form of consciousness. So all things and consciousness itself were but the manifestations of the one supreme Infinite Energy, which was in itself unknown by us. We could only possess a knowledge of its workings, and hence known facts of every description were of supreme importance for our guidance both in practical affairs and in philosophical speculations. Our great task was to learn and abide by the laws which bound the facts together, and to seek for some unity that might help us to explain the process of their movements and developments. It is interesting to note that

a later school of thinkers under the guidance of the late Prof. James, of Harvard, have made much of Spencer's noble endeavours to lay hold on facts and to gain the mastery over them. While they do not grant to Spencer much success in his attempt, still, they have found in his aims a great deal wherewith to encourage themselves.

Facts are all powerful. Being "lively," they have within themselves the power of synthesising with other facts. They become for the human mind the strongest instrument it can possess. Armed with them, it may set out to mould the future, for there is nothing objectively fixed. What Spencer and others have called the unknown, these new thinkers look upon as a legitimate field for the display of man's powers of will and action. Man is even strong enough to formulate and anticipate its movements in many ways. The extreme wing of the pragmatists would even require God to change his consciousness of himself from time to time, in accordance with the growing powers of man in his onward march through the regions of the unknown. Relativity here assumes a new form; indeed, it has almost become absolute. With Kant and Hamilton and Spencer, our knowledge was determined to be relative by the unknowable and unknown, but in these contemporary phases all is measured by the capacities of man

himself. The unknown is not the impenetrable dark which Spencer conceived; it is not that sphere which we believe God shall yet more fully make known to us: it is purely that which so far man has not yet formulated in terms of himself. While Spencer, following Hume, was contented to accept as facts what was impressed upon mind from the outside, we find the extreme pragmatists telling us that facts are from within. They are mind-formulated. Mind determines them according to its specific interests, and assimilates them with other already approved facts, and uses them with satisfaction so long as they work truly, i.e., usefully, and their value just lies in the fact that they perform faithfully the ends in view. Principles are merely facts in activity. Reality is therefore largely the work of man's own hands.

And so the pendulum swings. After all Kant's laborious attempts to seek room for faith by the limitations he imposed on knowledge, we find Hume again dominant among these thinkers, but on a positive foundation. The unknown cannot restrain man, and faith is very largely an assured confidence in his own powers and activities.

3.—Ethical Idealism.

The third phase which we shall notice relates itself to the especial emphasis which Kant laid upon the moral supremacy of man. This, he believed, it was impossible to establish on strictly theoretical grounds. Knowledge could only reveal to us a world of reciprocal relations under necessity. But moral law was independent of such connections, and dominated a sphere of its own, which was constituted of beings who were ends in themselves. No man was a means unto another: each should mutually respect the moral dignity of his fellows, and so act that his own actions might be capable of universal application. Duty was the summation of this morality—the stern resolve to do the right even in the face of a cold, unyielding world. In this kingdom of ends, or self-determining beings, there should reign the laws of righteousness and justice. Every man must learn to abide by truth and resist the demands of external authority when not in accordance with the inward constraints of his moral nature Complete fulfilment of all obligations may not be realised immediately here and now, but our plain duty is to reverence their commands, and act at all times

as if the divine laws of righteousness and justice were perfectly bodied forth in the world. We must accept them as absolutely binding on ourselves, and never at any time seek to excuse our own weaknesses through the errors and misdeeds of others. The means to right doing cannot await the perfection of things; we must make shift with what instruments we have at hand, and, in conforming to the highest laws of morality, we shall reveal ourselves as having been "born to a better clime," as possessing within us the spirit of freedom, reverence, and self-respect.

The successors of Kant, who sought merely to overcome his dualism, paid only secondary heed to this conviction of Kant's, that man's individual person was free and abiding for itself. As we have seen, the Hegelians attempted to rid themselves of the opposition between man and the world by resolving the differences into a unity that contains them both, but in such a manner that the individual becomes no more than a limitation of the Absolute, and the differences merely the unity itself in process of realisation. They sublimated the world-factor. The naturalists and agnostics made much of the lower aspect of the dualism, and founded it in an Eternal Energy, of which man was an offshoot. But there is a middle path. We may still hold to the distinction between man and nature, and

also maintain that it can be understood in the light of a higher unity, which man may obtain in overcoming the resistance of the material world. Kant's thought was constantly troubled by his reference to things in themselves, or by his almost complete separation between the practical and theoretical spheres of human reason. We may discard these shadows of Kant's system, and yet defend the "opposition" between man's personality and the world. It seems possible also to attain to a conception of unity without resolving the differences into the mere shadings of "one block." We need not stereotype the form of unity by numerical concepts. This endeavour has appealed to personal or ethical idealists as well as to pragmatists. Certain others, such as Royce, S. S. Laurie, and Jones, who favour an absolute idealism, recognise the need of establishing the individuality of man's person. The former thinkers agree with the latter that our oneness with God is not an identity in which our individuality is lost, but they part company in holding firmly that we do really have, even in our unison with the Absolute, a consciousness of separateness. We are one with the Absolute, and in him, but the unity is not a single "block" (James). We must seek to give it a more spiritual expression. Prof. Pringle-Pattison has shown that the "radical error, both of Hegelian and of the allied Eng-

lish doctrine, lies in the identification of the divine and human self-consciousness, or the unification of consciousness in the single self." Our consciousness is not God's; and there must be some means of differentiation.

It will be readily granted that finitude is an essential aspect of our being as we know it, and being finite we cannot escape what is not ourselves—"the other." This is everlastingly there for us, as something beyond, which we cannot, and did not, originate, but which we may yet understand, and even use for making our presence known and felt. With a view to comprehending this external world, we are forced by a rational necessity to posit its intelligibility, for if it had no meaning for us we could never come to recognise it as "other" than ourselves. We are constrained, as Professor Campbell-Fraser puts it, to hold by the rationality of the world. But we cannot remain there: a deeper necessity compels us to accept not mere reason, but Active Moral Reason at the heart of things. With these presuppositions we may analyse experience, recognising our results as those of a finite self-consciousness. We cannot obviate that point of view. Whatever we affirm of experience or God is dependent on our finitude: the revelation of the Absolute is useless except through consciousness, and our knowledge of God is, as it were, but the highest knowledge

of man. Without this acceptance of the world as rational and having for its foundation a righteous principle, our living and thinking in it become baseless and without value.

Now, it is true to say that we have an immediate awareness of God as a present spiritual reality, and, again quoting Prof. Pringle-Pattison, "his existence must be involved in facts of experience which possess immediate certainty." Indeed, we cannot posit intelligibility in the world unless we grant his existence. The very endeavour to demonstrate him presupposes him. He is there making himself known unto man, through whom alone can his "externalisation" of himself receive rational interpretation. The task for the finite mind is to render this immediate consciousness of God as explicit as possible. The personal idealists affirm that whatever we are immediately aware of is ultimate for man, and that as to God we must simply accept the fact of our direct experiential apprehension of him as unanalysable, as underived. It is to the intelligence that we look to unfold these matters. We wrong the intellect, we make it null and void, if we assert that these facts are not rationally interpretable. The mediation must be through intelligence and upon universal principles understood of all. Still, so direct is the contact with the Divine Being, so unfathomable are the depths of the human mind,

that their expression for others cannot exhaust their unexpressed meaning for the individual. They defy complete explication through the intelligence merely. There is from the human point of view the "uninvadible" in every man —that which is his and his alone, which no universal judgment can reveal in fulness to other finite minds. Only in God is the universal and individual perfectly realised: he is the one self-complete, absolutely self-dependent being, and because of his perfect fulfilment of himself man can find in him the guarantee that he may attain unto a fuller existence. In virtue of his universality a man is enabled to express himself to another, to show forth his community of being with his fellows; and in virtue of his individuality he stands alone, and solitary; his personality is impervious to finite aggressions. Completeness of being for man is an ideal, and in God he recognises its embodiment; and his life becomes an endeavour to make the universal within him as far as possible express itself through his individuality. When a man is intensely himself, and not "another," when he feels and knows his moral separateness, it is then his being is full, and God is immediately recognised as a present reality. Man, therefore, cannot rest with himself alone: he is more than a mere isolated unit: he is constrained to seek the universal and give it con-

crete utterance in his own life. This is faith, that supreme endeavour of man to realise within himself an uninterrupted union with the Absolute.

This unity with the Supreme Author of the universe is therefore the goal of man's existence and hope, and his struggle to attain unto it is reflected in nature. Our life is an effort to know, and nature is a channel through which we may make known our grasp of life's meaning. The fact of effort implies distinction, and this separateness must find some means of expression. The "being" of nature, or the world, is to impress on us this "apartness"; it thrusts otherness upon us. We cannot dissolve it, but we use it to express ourselves. We are in the world, but the world cannot explain us; it is there for our self-unfolding, not as an end of our being.

Nature both differentiates man and man, and God and man. Blot out nature, and God and man, as known by us, are no more: we cannot think nor formulate knowledge apart from the external world. It forces upon us the fact that there is something permanent beyond our powers, but which may become "organic" to ourselves through knowledge. We may change the surface of nature, but its laws stand fast, and, being rational, we are able to manipulate them for our own ends. We do not make nature rational and intelligible: we find

it so, and the more we systematise its facts in terms of knowledge, the more command we possess over the world of external things. A better understanding and formulation of natural laws, on man's part, help to externalise the revelation of his uplift and movements. So in our redistribution of nature's elements, we partly reflect what we have grown to be and leave behind us the marks of our aspirations and achievements. The outside world becomes a means of registering the attainment of knowledge and the effects of human activity. Nature is not absolutely opposed to us; it is there for us to understand and use for communication with other minds.

There is not one world of natural things absolutely separate from a spiritual world: there is but one universe for all. Still, nature is not a mere emanation of the Absolute: it is not a mere system of relations, but an abiding reality. As we develop and change from form to form, so we come to clearer recognition of nature's eternal value. The Supreme Being is not in nature as a magician working behind the scene. Rather through the unalterable laws of the world he shows forth the sureness of his own directive intelligence, and summons from man a corresponding faith in his own ability to determine the world of things in accordance with the highest purposes known to him.

We cannot fail, then, from the standpoint of personal realism, to recognise that the reason that is in nature is not our reason. It it not of our making. It is comprehensible to us, but it is other than ourselves. As we know spirit and commune as spirit with spirit, we come to a better understanding of nature in its higher aspects. The weight of an unintelligible world would be crushing indeed; but as we peer with this knowledge into the vastness of the universe, so we come to accept its deep-seated unity—the revelation of a beneficent creator in the depths of it.

The most prominent feature in the moral life, as revealed by Kant, is the free activity of will in response to the inner constraints of law as against subservience to passion or external objects of desire. But Kant's principle of moral activity only obtained in a world transcending the limitations of sense and understanding. Self-determined action on the part of a living agent is absolutely essential to its moral being, but we are not bound to accept the fact of freedom as the result of the abstraction of selves from things. In the exercise of our moral freedom we have to reckon with a resisting external world; but the opposition is not final and absolute. Nature is under law. The universality of her laws may be relied on and organised. By this means what was seemingly a stubborn medium

becomes an instrument for the expression of mind and its determinations. This fact is essential to the exercise of human freedom. If the sequences in nature were arbitrary and utterly at the mercy of blind chance and varying laws, man would have no means of control or direction. But he inevitably trusts in the intelligible response of nature to his demands. In spite of occasional lapses, more apparent than real, he still confides in the unalterable laws, and their systematisation constitutes them an efficient factor for the display of his activities and for the overcoming of the opposition of environing conditions. This organisation of the external world is the unity of nature as object for self-consciousness; and abiding within the sphere of the self-conscious, it becomes the reflection of self-active being, revealing its spontaneity in a universe which it strives to reconcile with itself. The influences of external objects are not to be rejected without criticism as of no moral value. As stimuli to action, they have their place as natural wants, but they must be subordinated to the ethical direction of a mind capable of determining their worth and significance in moral action. Without this principle of self-initiating, self-directing activity moral life is impossible: it must simply be accepted as an ultimate fact of ethics. Its application must cover every individual being, and, as a primal

condition of morality, it must find a place in any synthesis of life that is ultimate for man.

Life in its essence is spontaneous. In response to external stimulus, it may merely reveal reflex movement; but in man at his highest spiritual development the activity displays a purposiveness, a self-determination, original and unique on the part of each living soul. The more spontaneously life manifests itself and its inner gradings, the more abiding and abundant it is. Eternal life is complete spontaneity. For us it is an ideal, beyond present attainments, but in process of realisation; and we press on in the faith that fulness of life and eternal existence are our birthrights. This truth must stand: we cannot avoid it; it operates as a living factor in human endeavour. But if confined entirely within the individual it is lost. Spirit or life is certainly real and individual, but its concreteness takes on a universal form, which is objective and understood of all. Only as it is bodied forth is life known: we do not comprehend spirit apart from its manifestation in the external world, i.e., through body, which, as the late S. S. Laurie has it, is a condition of its specific mode of existence as a mind here and now. The individual, therefore, is a "concrete dual unity," and in self-determined individuality life comes to fulness of being. But that

does not mean that these individual lives are positively separate or atomic existences. The world assuredly is not made up of such a conglomeration, for, while it is a fact that life as we know it manifests itself in living selves, yet there is present to us also the fact of unity, which is not the outcome of these several existences, but rather the truth which they in their self-determining nature express. Life at its richest and fullest development is spirit at one with itself and the world; but the oneness is not a dead numeral. It is a unity in spirit—a oneness in activity, at least, as well as a unity that makes for expansion of thought and feeling. This harmony of activities is an ideal which is the goal of the striving of our lives. We know it as an ideal, and can inform our being with its power and strength as a spiritual end. This being so, it is not true to the facts to make self-legislating will the ultimate expression of life as many seek to do. We cannot resolve all thought into mere activity, even though it is purposive; nor can we engulf purpose and emotion entirely in the intelligence, although acts of will must be rationally explained. These functions cannot be derived from one another, nor can they completely solve one another. Every expression of the self is capable of being regarded in the light of these three aspects. It must be a moral act; it must show forth a meaning; and

it must reveal some emotional tendency. In each of its functions the self acts in its fulness, and it is making entities of abstractions to treat one aspect of spirit as all pervading. The truth rather is, so far as we comprehend it, that these three forms are but phases of the spiritual in its manifestations, and that life in its full spirituality unfolds itself through all three, not in separation from one another, but in concrete and inseparable unity. Indeed, spirit is so full and rich that it is beyond our power to reduce its expression to a closed system. We are forced by the necessities of the case to make known our knowledge of life in these forms, regarding one for the time being more consequential for the immediate purpose in view; but we also know that our endeavour to present a constructive presentation of life in all its manifestations is purely interpretation, and not the living, abiding spirit itself.

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